

PFLAG EDMONTON

September 1995

NEXT MEETING:

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

7:30 PM

Location: Please phone Cindy [redacted] or Lynne [redacted] for our temporary meeting place while the new GLCC is undergoing renovations!

As always we warmly welcome les/bi/gay and gay positive people to attend our meetings.

Questions? Comments? Please call Lynne [redacted] or Cindy [redacted]

'95 GAY PRIDE PARADE

& PICNIC

A reported 2000 people turned out for the Gay Pride Parade and the PFLAG-sponsored picnic which followed. Walking under the new PFLAG banner were Joan, Ernie, Lynn, Cindy, Shirley and Jarret, Gail and David (from PFLAG Calgary), Brinie, Jenny and Jason, Dorothy (a "young" senior citizen), Ellen and sons Marcel and Steven. We were "family"!

Thanks to all these people, to those who worked hard to make the picnic a success and also to Denise who funded our new windproof, rainproof banner.

We carried colorful, large-lettered signs artistically designed by Jason which expressed the following

sentiments: "Hate is not a family value", "I love my gay son", I love

awarded the above certificate of recognition. We hope that our

Pride '95

recognizes

PFLAG

(Parents & Friends Of Lesbians & Gays)

for outstanding service to the
gay, lesbian & bisexual
community of Edmonton

Heather Bruce
Heather Bruce
Co-chair

Mark Bink
Mark Bink
Co-chair

16 June 1995

my straight Mom", and etc. We hope to use these eye-catching signs at future events in which PFLAG Edmonton participates, e.g. conferences, speaking engagements, display tables in malls, etc. Thanks, Jason, for your generosity! A heartfelt thanks also to Jason and his parents, Jenny and Terry, for making and selling this years pink ribbons at the picnic. The creative "prizes" donated by PFLAG members were received with gleeful gratitude by the lucky picnickers with the winning numbers!

PFLAG Edmonton members felt both honored and delighted to be

contribution to the well-being of the gay, lesbian and bisexual community continues to expand into a diversity of successful ventures.

THANKYOUS!

We would particularly like to thank **PFLAG Toronto** who wrote to us last May with a wealth of ideas for expanding our PFLAG activities, e.g. a publicity chairperson, membership on the Mental Health Association Board, appearances on TV and talk shows, profiles in the local newspaper, making videos, participating in films, meeting with politicians, etc! And thanks



for the ideas for obtaining much-needed funding. Support among PFLAG groups is a great morale booster!

We were delighted to receive a great gift from PFLAG Detroit during the "lazy?, hazy" days of summer - a box full of booklets, pamphlets and other literature so badly needed for our participation in the Child Welfare League of Canada Regional Conference this October 22, 23 & 24th. (The focus of this conference is on meeting the challenges of at-risk youth in a changing world.) Thanks PFLAG Detroit and we look forward to viewing the "What If I'm Gay?: A Search for Understanding" video used by the Birmingham Public Schools in their "Health Lessons on Homosexual Orientation and Homosexuality" course.

We would also like to thank Joan and "Maggie, The Iron Lady" for their wonderful hospitality at our annual BBQ for PFLAG members. It wouldn't have been the same without their flowers, fountain and scrumptious beans!

To "A Grateful Individual" - we very much appreciate your financial donation to our group. Unfortunately we are not yet a registered charitable organization but hope to make some progress on this in the near future. Any volunteers?

We assure you that the money you gave will be put to excellent use to continue our goals of support, education and advocacy.

More donations towards the conference continue to arrive! From Dr. W. come videos, an

historical poster of famous gay/lesbian people, and excellent research articles on "The History of Homosexual Orientation", "Adolescent Suicide", "A Developmental Perspective on Sexual Orientation", "Adolescence and the Homosexually Orientated Teen", "What Needs to be Done", and more. Copies available to other PFLAG groups or members from:

PFLAG Edmonton Editor



And to end our thankyou's on a drumroll, many thanks to you, Dale, for all your efforts towards making our new "computer" helpline a success!



PARENTS'-(FLAG) SUPPORT

"A SECRET PLACE"

By Lee Lynn

(From PFLAG Vancouver,
May '95)

In his *Washington Blade* column Lawrence Biemiller writes of his father: "Not that he's not a nice enough guy, 'cause he is. He just didn't know---doesn't know---how to have a queer son."

How true of most parents, and how unutterable sad. As children, we

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don't have the words to communicate who we are. Some of us come out, a simplistic and incomplete revelation of our real selves. Our openness often has the unhappy consequence of - on some level--repelling those we ask for acceptance. Parents seldom want to deal with a sexual child, much less a homosexual one. And my experience has been that homosexual, for a straight person, means "sexual:" to the exclusion of other qualities.

As adults, we have the words--or do we? Whenever I run into one particular parent my eyes mist over. She so obviously loves her queer child, and is so active in fighting those who not only discriminate against him but hate and threaten the whole family because of its activism, that I am overcome with admiration and gratitude--and pain--because this is the way it should be for all of us. Yet I know that particular child did not willingly come out to his accepting, educated, liberal parents. They respectfully, kindly, gave him the opportunity to say what were probably the most difficult words of his young life. He was unable to initiate the disclosure, perhaps because every queer person knows that no words can ever completely express who and what we are. Without that wordless understanding, I doubt that any heterosexual parent can ever completely accept a child's queerness. They may love us, reserve judgment, support our unions, but when we listen hard--let our lavender antennae tingle--we know there will always be a sense of bafflement, a caution around us.

In Irish literature there is a fascination with the changeling, a new child suddenly substituted for the "real" child, the one parents



thought they had. The changeling is a mystical explanation of the different, disappointing offspring. We see our difference cloud our parents' eyes with, at least, concern and, all too often, horror.

"Ian did live in a secret place when he was younger, a place only gay children know," writes Georgia Dulcea in a *New York Times* interview of set designer Ian MacNeil and his father, Robert MacNeil of PBS' *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*. As I read of Ian's "secret place" I immediately envisioned green bowers, like illustrations in my childhood copy of Robert Lewis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. There was always an androgynous white child pictured in such drawings, an unsmiling but not unhappy being with Prince Valiant hair, who was intent on some solitary activity. This secret and necessary place of ours is recreated by queer adults in bars or works of imagination, elaborate gardens or very exclusive intimate relationships. Interior decoration takes on new meaning when we consider all the queer children perplexed by the world and retreating to secret places to dream.

"I think gay people are some of the best actors in the world," says a young lesbian in the *Washington Blade*, commenting on the personas we slip into for families, employers, the futon salesperson. I imagine the wary pride in that young lesbian voice, already alert to how accomplished we are in our subterfuges. I also imagine the heartbreaking sadness in her eyes, her knowledge that no child should have to make believe forever....

Sadness is inevitable for those of us who choose not to come out to parents—and for many of those who do. That invisible cloak a queer child draws around herself is no

seasonal item. Whether we store it in a handy closet or donate it to a thrift shop, the years of wear have imprinted us. Our parents are as alien to us in this one respect as we are to them. There is an extra guardedness built into what, for many, is already an uneasy relationship.

Regret our defenses as we may, the ironic truth does not change. **The very parents who fight hardest to eradicate discrimination, who struggle most intensely to love us unconditionally, are, through no fault of their own, often the people who taught us that we needed to wear cloaks, to hide in secret places.** If it is true that most parents simply don't know how to have queer daughters and sons, it is also true that we don't know how to have straight parents. We become the best actors in the world to bridge that awkward gap. But when we act, it is from love.

PFLAG EDUCATION

EDMONTON

* August 2, 1995 - Cindy spoke to Human Sexuality (Family Studies 222) course students at the University of Alberta on how having a gay son affected all members of the family. A portion of the video "Out" was shown and Tracy Duncan, a Planned Parenthood counsellor, also spoke to the students. Instructor Dr. Njeri Waiyaki was delighted with the response from the students and indicated she would like to have PFLAG representatives speak again. Anyone interested in doing this type of speaking please phone Cindy.

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* Following a request from the Victim Services Unit of the RCMP in Morinville Cindy met with their coordinator Faye Logan. She basically wanted to know what our PFLAG group does and where we hold our support meetings as she knows two families who could benefit. One copy of each of our brochures was passed along to her.

* An article about PFLAG Edmonton will be in the next issue of *Times X* magazine which will come out in tabloid (newspaper) form in the future.

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TORONTO

(from the Canadian Press, Aug 27, 95, via the Edmonton Journal)

"For years Toronto has introduced classes - sometimes entire schools - tailored to the needs of teenage girls, street kids, immigrants, Indians, drop-outs and artists.

Nary a word was spoken against the practice of separating special-needs students until this summer, when it was revealed the school board was about to open two transition classes: One aimed at black drop-outs, the other at homosexuals.

The modest programs-each involves a maximum of 25 students and one full-time teacher-made many people uncomfortable.

Some consider the programs to be the first step toward a school system segregated by race and sexual preference.

For supporters of the schemes, however, the issue was framed another way: Why won't the school system deal honestly with the demonstrated academic problems black and homosexual students are having?



"The only reason this (proposal) has been controversial and noteworthy is that this one is focusing on lesbian and gay and black students," said John Campey, the city's only openly gay trustee.

"I honestly have more problems with a full-time gifted program which pulls kids out, than I do with the Triangle Program, which is designed as a transitional program for an identifiable group of at-risk students."

* * * * *

CALGARY

Author Pierre Tremblay has published the latest edition of his report, "The Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Factor in the Youth Suicide Problem". Tremblay, who held a meet-the-press session at the Boardwalk Cafe in late May, 95 included a major focus on Calgary in his report.

According to the report, "GLB youth are at very high risk for having many of the most serious youth problems, such as suicide attempts (and probably suicide), drug and/or alcohol abuse, depression, declining academic achievement, dropping out of school, becoming street youth, delinquency, prostitution, etc."

The 205-page document was tabled in the Alberta Legislature on April 27, 1995 and is addressed to Alberta's Minister of Education. It is available exclusively at the Boardwalk Cafe for \$14.95. About 70% of the proceeds of the sales will go to Calgary's newly-formed GLB youth group, I-DENTITY.

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Xtra West)

Some UBC faculty members are proposing a curriculum of gay and lesbian studies for the university. The proposed curriculum is a result of three years' work by the Faculty Association's ad hoc Committee on Lesbian and Gay Issues (which) two years ago organized a lecture series on gay studies funded by the president of the university... This series demonstrated the university's recognition of queer studies as a valid field of work.

PFLAG EDMONTON

Business Meeting, Aug 29/95

Three monetary motions were voted on and passed at this meeting:

1. It was decided to raise membership fees by \$5 which means we still have the best membership rate in Canada! The PFLAG year runs from October 1 to September 30 so these much-needed fees are due and payable October 1, 1995. **For financial reasons we can no longer afford to send newsletters to those who have not paid.**
2. \$300 was allocated to fund a "High School poster". This poster features a black and white photograph of recently graduated high school students from the Edmonton area with PFLAG Edmonton's name, logo and two help/information phone numbers at the bottom. Several PFLAG parents have volunteered to approach various Edmonton high schools to have some posters put on display. **More volunteers are needed!** Please phone Ellen [redacted] if you can help!

We feel greatly indebted to Brenda, the photographer, and to Ken, the graphic artist, who

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donated their services for this poster. Someday we will be a registered charity so that such generous people will at least have the benefit of a tax deduction!

3. \$300 was also allocated for literature - pamphlets, issue papers, booklets, leaflets, information sheets, etc. - for the upcoming annual Canadian Welfare Children's League Conference being held October 22, 23 & 24 at the Hilton Hotel. (PFLAG Edmonton has been asked to facilitate a workshop on gay and lesbian youth.) This literature will be sold at very reasonable rates yet also serve as a fund-raiser. PFLAG will have 3 display tables as well as two TV - VCR's playing 7 videos (condensed on to 3 video tapes by Ernie, our video expert!) **More volunteers are needed to "man" the display tables.** Recently graduated les/bi/gay youth are particularly welcome! Please phone Ellen [redacted] if you can do a two or three hour shift. **Thankyou!**

PFLAG OUTREACH POSTERS

A new 'outreach' poster has been designed by Dale with our PFLAG logo (in color), our name, a brief explanation of what we're all about, and our two help/information phone numbers:

[redacted] VB 3524 and
[redacted] (Lynne)

Dale has distributed these at GLCC, Boystown Cafe, Lyon Empire, etc. **If you know of any churches, community halls, malls, business establishments, etc where these posters could be placed, please phone Cindy (459-8379) and she will pass this info along.**

IT'S A GAY LIFE!

September 1995

DEAR KELTIE:

Nancy wrote the following letter to her high school brother, Keltie, a few days after "coming out" to her parents:

"I hope you don't find this issue too distressing. Having read so much about homosexuality myself and having been around lesbians and somewhat involved in the culture for about half a year or so, I tend to forget how difficult it is for non-homosexuals to understand. The problem is really lack of education and lack of exposure to openly homosexual people (because undoubtedly some of the people we know are gay and we just don't realize it.) Even if people aren't disturbed by the fact of homosexuality, they usually have lots of questions, lots of stereotypes that are false, and lots of need for education on the subjects. If you have any questions I hope you'll be able to ask me. Certainly you should be aware (and probably are) that there's a lot of erroneous and hate filled literature in libraries (as well as some good stuff) - and similarly there are lots of people with hate-filled or simply ignorant ideas on what it means to be homosexual.

I can't speak for gay men, but women tend to come to consider themselves lesbians from a variety of paths. Some know right from when they were kids and some struggle through a time when they

try to ignore their feelings or try to live as heterosexuals. Many marry



and only later realize they would be happier living as lesbians. Of, course, we are trained in our society to be heterosexual - homosexuality is rarely offered as a lifestyle choice by parents, sex ed. classes, TV shows, novels, popular media, etc. Choosing to live as a lesbian is going against the norm - so one makes a conscious decision to be a lesbian; one tends to put a lot of thought into it before declaring oneself - it's not something one is apt to drift into.

As for me, I went through several years when I thought I was going through a phase- and certainly many adolescents do go through a

homosexual phase. However my "phase" lasted all the way through university. Because I felt younger than my peers and socially and emotionally behind, I stuck to this phase idea for a long time. But by the time I was in my early 20's it was a crutch - an excuse for not growing up. Because for me being mature and living a full adult life means living as a lesbian.

While lesbianism is not the "norm" it is definitely not abnormal (as in "deviant")k. Someone once called lesbianism a "variation on a theme" and I think that's a helpful way to think of it. The theme isn't men loving women and women loving men; the theme is love. And it's not that I don't love men - I do love men - especially the men in my family. But, where heterosexuals choose to love someone of the opposite sex for their primary intense relationship, I choose to love members of my own sex. It's difficult for me to understand how anyone can object to love - no matter whether it is expressed by heterosexuals or by homosexuals.

Anyway living as a lesbian makes me happy and I hope everyone in the family will come to realize this fact. There are a lot of difficulties in being a lesbian and I have a lot of things in my head still to work out (mostly not particularly connected to being a lesbian though.) Especially in a small

town, one has to be careful about "who knows".

This semi secrecy does cause some stress - I hope some day I can be a bit more open, but at this point I'm not willing to be forced into having to defend myself (and my job I suppose) or educate an entire town for the sake of being open and honest. At this point, all I can do is try to be honest with the people I care most about - it takes a fair bit of emotional energy and certainly a fair bit of time to answer the questions and so on of each person I tell, so it will have to be a slow process - even if there are some days when I feel so happy about finally living as a lesbian, and knowing other lesbians, that I'd like to share this happiness with all kinds of people.

I want you to know that I made my choice to live as a lesbian independently - I've never been "persuaded" to pursue this kind of lifestyle (on the contrary, I've been "persuaded" to live as a heterosexual). For me being a lesbian is natural and normal. And the main thing I want to stress is that these choices are based on love - that's the key word.

P.S. Our daughter and her partner have been in a loving relationship for the past twelve years. **Their love is an example for any family.**

Mary

EVENTS CALENDAR

EVM

Open House Wine & Cheese



Saturday, September 9, '95

@ 7:30 pm

Everyone Welcome!

LIATRIS SOCIETY

Nature Walk and Corn Roast

Elk Island

Saturday, September 16, '95

Meet at [redacted] St @ 11am

For info: [redacted] Anita) or
[redacted] Richard)

GMOC FALL WORKSHOPS

(For gay and bi men)

- * Sunday, Sept 24, '95-
"Celebrating Safer Sex"
- * October 4 - November 22 -
"Being Gay in the 90's"
- * October 24 - November 8 -
"Coming Out in the 90's"

For details & any time changes
please phone: 988-3671

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT! '95

This march takes place at night and is in the same spirit as many similar events taking place all over the world.

"Take Back the Night" is a profound symbolic statement of our movement's demand that perpetrators of such violence, from rapists to batterers, be held responsible for their actions and encouraged to change.

This year's Edmonton march will be held on **Saturday, September 15**. For further info call Sylvia

[redacted] or Nanci [redacted]

IT'S A GAY LIFE!

AIDS WALK FOR LIFE!

Sunday, Oct 1, '95

Kinsmen Park

To register or for further info
please call: [redacted]

EVM

Cabaret & Open Bid Auction

Sunday, Oct 28, '95

Catalyst Theatre

10943-84 Avenue

7:00pm - Cocktails, Open Bid
Auction

8:00pm - Showtime!

Everybody loves a cabaret! Join us as we celebrate Hallowe'en in the company of friends as the choir pulls out all the stops in a riotous evening that is sure to delight!

ENTERTAINMENT! OPEN BID
AUCTION! FUN! FOOD!
PRIZES! FRIENDS!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

250 volunteers are needed for Michael Phair's re-election campaign. Anyone can help! It is not necessary to live in Ward 4. Among the services being requested are:

- * Delivering flyers
- * Making signs
- * Putting up signs
- * General office work
- * Folding leaflets
- * Going door-to-door with Michael

Office: 11145 - 107 Ave

Phone: [redacted]